

DR. SABINE'S PATIENT.

PROLOGUE.

"We find the prisoner Not Guilty, my lord."

"I pause, a dead hush throughout the crowded court, and the foreman added slowly:

"We wish, my lord, to add a rider. On the evidence before us, so entirely circumstantial, we feel obliged to give the accused the benefit of the doubt, and therefore we find him Not Guilty."

A wave, a surge swept through the crowd—not of relief, not of satisfaction—yet the prisoner was young, handsome, and there were frowns in the evidence.

"Monstrous verdict!" said one man, indignantly; "the evidence against him is simply overwhelming. He must have done it!"

A gentleman just before the speaker glanced round with a slight lift of the brows, a slightly amused smile, as if to say: "Much you know about law." Aloud he remarked:

"A clear verdict of what in Scotland would be Non Proven; the man is acquitted by a fluke of evidence. Practically in everybody's eyes the poor fellow is guilty."

"Hard lines though that, isn't it, sir?" said another man. "Anyhow he can't be tried again, if someone turned up and said he saw him fire the shot. There he goes out of the dock. I suppose they've got some formalities to do now."

Of course there were, and the man so lately on trial for murder must have left by a private exit, for the crowd saw him no more—know not if his heart was almost broken with the agony of his burden of another's awful crime.

The evidence, circumstantially, had been heavy. It had been proved that there had been high words between the accused and the murdered man, Mr. Guest, of Elm Hall, about his sister, shortly before the fatal deed was done; that he (the accused) had left the Hall in a mad passion; that the dead man had also gone out towards the fatal copse in his own park; that a pistol-shot had been heard by a game-keeper at a distance, and on running to the spot he found the accused, Albert Claremont, with a small revolver in his hand and a blood-stain on his hand, bending over the murdered man, evidently horrified. One witness had sworn he had seen the pistol in Claremont's possession, but had been forced to admit it was the ordinary sort of revolver, and it might have been one like the weapon produced.

It was proved—so far as a negative can be called proven—that nobody had been seen near the spot or park, going or coming towards it. No stranger seen about the neighbourhood except the accused, was admitted the fact, and out of all these there were of course minor points added, for and against, need less to mention here. The game-keeper declared that it was impossible for anyone to have fired the shot and escaped in any direction without his seeing a figure on the open as he himself ran. There was a patch of young fern just a little way beyond the copse, but he had run close by it and must have seen anyone amongst it however crouched down.

The defence, in the hands of a very clever rising Q.C., was bold, and attacked the prosecuting defects of evidence, more than relying on its own denials, since on both sides almost everything might or might not be and the accused had no witnesses save his own evidence, taken on oath at the inquest under arrest on suspicion.

The substance was this: Albert Claremont was a gentleman possessed of about a thousand a year. He admitted meeting Mr. Guest and his young sister in Paris, where the former, a very betting man, had gone for the Grand Prix. He (the prisoner) admitted a stormy, hostile interview at Elm Hall on the fatal day, of which Miss Guest was the subject, but he refused all further detail or reason. He had left the Hall; he started in hot blood, and had proceeded some distance towards the western gate of the park, when he was startled by the report of fire-arms coming from a distant copse of trees. He turned and saw Mr. Guest, and, thinking it was probably some poacher, but still might not be. He was horrified to find Mr. Guest lying dead on his face, bleeding from a wound in the back, and a revolver near him. He picked this up and turned the body partially, to see if life was there at all. The game-keeper Brown rushed up, and cried out "Good Heaven, sir, have you done this?" He said, "No, I heard a shot and came up. Help me carry him to the house." The revolver was not his, nor the fellow to it.

The counsel for the defence in a telling speech, had emphasized all this, and insisted on the weakness of the other side, and suggesting the possibility that the real murderer might have fled at once through the park, despite Brown's assertion; and of course, the deceased might have had an enemy of whom no one knew—he was not a man, admittedly, of very austere life.

The judge had summed up very impartially, but of necessity, in justice, in favor of giving the benefit of the doubt to the accused.

Hence the verdict just given, that sent forth a young fellow with bare life, and—to the majority—a blighted name.

CHAPTER I.

DR. SABINE'S PATIENT.

"What you take my hand! You do not believe me guilty, Dr. Sabine?"

"No," said Dr. Sabine, with the quiet emphasis of absolute conviction; "no more than that poor young thing upstairs, whose brain the tragedy has unhinged."

The two men were standing face to face, the younger's right hand clasped close in the elder's—the latter, a fine-featured, intellectual-looking man of fifty; the former a tall, very handsome young fellow, who might well, indeed, win and keep a woman's love.

"It is that that is the bitterest drop in the cup!" he said, with a fierce anguish that wrung the doctor's heart to see. "My doom of guilt was the world's verdict. I could bear, but this—my darling driven mad—mad by the shock! She must—she could only have seen the dead man carried in from her window, and heard them say he was murdered by me. Heaven! her brother slain by her lover!—the horror of the mere idea was enough to turn such a sensitive brain! What wonder she was found senseless in her room, and awoke, after days of oblivion, to madness! Is there no hope? Merciful Heaven! is there no hope?"

"I would not say that, my dear boy," said Dr. Sabine, deeply moved; "but I dare not give you much. She has had a frightful shock somehow."

"Somehow!" repeated Claremont, starting. "You think, then—"

"I have no definite thought, only theory. Bertha, the maid, simply left Isabel in her room, and she found her unconscious, and

no one saw or heard her about in the interval; but Isabel knew you were below, you told us."

"Yes, knew I had come to plainly tell her brother that I cared nothing for his fortune, but meant—since she loved me—to make her my wife in spite of him."

"Exactly," said Sabine; "she, doubtless, saw you leave, and may then have gone to Mr. Guest to plead or defy."

"The last, then; my darling is as high-spirited as she is sensitive. Pardon my interruption."

"And he was a violent man," concluded the doctor. "If my theory be near the mark, only she, poor heart, and Heaven, know what may have passed to madden her. From my experience of insanity—and I have had this private asylum for many years—I am convinced there has been something more in her case than seeing the corpse carried in, even though you followed and she heard anything against you. It is a mystery which only she can solve if ever she recovers. You are going abroad yet?"

"Yes," said the other, bitterly; "what place have I now in the world? The verdict acquitted me legally, to convince morally of a foul murder. Yes, I am going abroad, but I am going to set myself one life-object—to try and find if there was any man or woman to whom Guest's death was of advantage."

"Heaven send you success, my dear Claremont, for only the discovery of the real murderer will, I fear, clear you to the majority of the world. Well, you wish to see Isabel; but, my poor boy, I warn you, it will be very bitter for you—I do not think she will know you."

"Not know me?" Albert staggered back, putting his hand before his eyes; "no, I know her lover, who would die a thousand deaths for her! she must—she will know me at least out of all the world."

"Follow me," said Dr. Sabine; "but be careful not to excite her much. But if she knows you—there is hope."

And he led the way upstairs, opened a door, and only said quietly, "Go in."

Albert Claremont passed within and paused.

The apartment was spacious and luxurious, the windows looking out over large grounds, and beyond over the wooded beauties of Highgate, amidst which the house stood. One glance took that in; it was the one solitary figure that riveted the man's gaze—a slender, beautiful girl, such a mere girl, sitting in a low fauteuil by a window, her white hands lying in listless apathy on her lap, the whole attitude that of hopelessness; but in the great, dark eyes, that turned slowly on the newcomer, there was a wild, dumb horror, as if their gaze had looked ones and for all on some sight too appalling to be ever blotted out—a sight before which reason had fallen a wreck; there was no recognition in that glance as it met that of the well-nigh heart-broken man who stood there, still as a statue, striving for perfect self-mastery before he dared move or speak.

Three months ago they had met in Paris with plighted troth; one month later, on that terrible day of the murder, he had bent over her unconscious form before they put him under arrest; and now—

"Voe! woe! Each heart must bleed, must break."

That they must meet like this!

"Isabel, the rich, low tones said, the soft music trembled on."

There was the slightest quiver of those delicate hands, as if the loved, familiar sound had somehow, thrilled the cords of the woman's heart. His leaped with a wild hope; but he only moved quietly across the carpet, knelt beside her, and took her hands into his own.

"Isabel, my darling!—my one love! Don't you know me!—even me?"

No control could banish the suppressed agony in the voice, the deep trouble in the eyes, in every haggard line of the handsome face uplifted to hers.

She gazed on him in a strange, strained way, that seemed as if eagerly searching for something, through the horror that never left her eyes for a moment.

"Isabel," she said, uncertainly; "and oh, how the sweet wandering voice thrilled and wrung his soul! 'I don't know' with a frown, 'it is not his face!'"

"His face!" There was, then, a struggling memory of some face, whose? His, her murdered brother's or some other? She did not surely recognize him for himself; it could not be the soul, within its darkened prison.

"Felt his presence by a spell of might."

Or why did she not shrink and repulse him in indignance?

Instead, she left her hands in his; kept that strangely eager, pathetic gaze on his face.

"Isabel!—sweetheart!—it is I—your own Albert. Have you no word for me?"

The wide, tearless eyes dilated, her bosom heaved, her lips quivered; but there was still no response, and no repulsion.

Claremont dared another step, impelled by the bold acumen of his great love—perhaps a more unerring guide than even the physician's skill. He passed his arm around the girl's slender form drawing it slowly, as he felt it yield, closer to his breast; closer yet, till surely the passionate throbs of his heart against hers must stir an answering throb.

"Still no sign, yet yields to my embrace," he muttered, with quickening breath.

"This, then, to test, for only from one man living could she suffer it!"

He laid his dark cheek to hers, and felt her start, yet still not shrink; one second he hesitated, and then his lips touched hers unresisted, pressed them closer and closer in the very passion of love and agony that went straight from heart to heart, and by its power woke the deadened faculties so far.

She suddenly clung to him, sobbing on his bosom.

"O, not a dream!—not a dream!—but his very self! Albert!—O, Albert, my love!—I am maddened—maddened, I know; but it is you who hold me so close to your heart, and kiss my lips!"

"My precious one, yes, your own lover!" Claremont whispered, brokenly. "Your heart knew me all the time, my poor darling!"

Isabel nestled to him, then whispered suddenly, in a frightened way:

"It's gone! Something has gone from here," putting her hand to her head, "and it won't come back! O, it won't come back, Albert!"

"Yes, darling, it will in time, you know," he said, caressingly; "but his heart felt breaking to see her pitiful look of appeal."

"I am going away for a little time to try and find it."

"Going away?" Isabel cried, wildly. "He will kill me if I am left! He'll kill me!"

"Nobody shall touch you, dearest," said Claremont, quickly, but firmly. "No one knows where you are but Dr. Sabine and

myself. Who could wish to kill you, my Isabel?"

She gazed at him with those wild, horror-struck eyes, then broke into a laugh, such a laugh for one who loved her to hear!

"Ha, ha! Yes, he will, if he knows, I tell you! Only it's gone—gone!" She wrung her hands now, then gripped her lover's with the strength of madness. "Are you sure he doesn't know it, Albert?"

"Quite sure, Isabel."

"What—O, what!—was in the poor darkened memory and shattered mind? What did she fear, and know? Who was the 'he'?"

"Great Heaven! was his secret suspicion, unspoken yet, right? Did she know—"

"My darling, believe me, you are, and shall be, as safe here as in my arms!" he went on, tenderly—oh, how tenderly!— soothing her agitation. "And I shall not be far; only within a few hours' run; and I shall come back, I hope, before long, to keep you always."

She put her soft cheek against his, caressingly.

"There is such trouble in this dear face!" she said, wistfully. "O, such trouble!"

For, follow, he could only strain her to his breast, and bow his head to hers, forcing back for her sake, the choking sob and and bitter cry:

"You break my heart! You break my heart!"

"There'll be no trouble then, when you are strong again," he whispered, at last. "I must go away now, dearest, beloved one, for your sake."

A last close embrace, a last long kiss, and he went out.

He could scarcely have borne more, the doctor saw, after all he had suffered these two months past.

"I know all," he said, quietly. "I was outside—near, if needed. She knew you at last; day by day she knew how that she will some day remember all we think she knows, the shock of which has had such terrible effect. Go on your search, my dear boy, and Heaven speed you with hope."

But Christmas came—spring, summer, autumn—Christmas drew nigh again, and still "Christ deferred made the heart sick."

CHAPTER II.

THE JOCKEY'S STORY.

"Second class—something carriage—here you are—quick, please!"

In jumped the little man addressed, slap with the door, and off again swept the tidal train from Dover after its last stoppage.

The new passenger, who could scarcely have weighed over seven stone and a half, and whose whole gait, dress (albeit quite ordinary clothing), and tout ensemble told him to be a jockey, deposited his valises, settled himself to his satisfaction, and then, glancing his shrewd eyes round, found himself opposite to the only other occupant of the compartment, a handsome, distinguished-looking young man, wrapped in a well-furled ulster.

The tall, fine form, with its graceful easy pose and masculine beauty of both figure and countenance, were an almost ludicrous contrast to the little sharp, though bonhomie face, and underlined features of the jockey.

"Very odd this evening, sir," said he, rubbing his lean, muscular hands; "looks like snow—but it's reasonable weather for Christmas-time, sir."

"Well—yes—but," said the other, with a half-smiling smile which the dropping moustache veiled, "I rather hate 'seasonable' weather; English people use it—means infernally disagreeable. I hate cold!"

"Ha! ha! ha! Foreigner, eh, sir—do for it rather!"

"Think so?" returned the gentleman, with certainly a foreign shrug; "well, anyhow, I have been much abroad, and am just from Paris."

"Ah! indeed, sir. I was there last May twelvemonth myself."

"Ah!" said the other, with a quick, sudden flash in his dark eyes, "and you are a jockey, I think. Were you at the Grand Prix that year?"

"Oh, yes, sir," returned the delighted little man, "I rode Temeraire for the Vicomte de Latour. Was you there?"

"In Paris at the time—yes; but not at the races, though several I know were, and, I believe, betted heavily on it."

"Aye, sir; there was a lot of money won and lost too that day," returned the jockey, knowing emphatically. "One gentleman I knew—an awful one to bet, sir, though not rich—Mr. Pierce Bovill—was—and he lost his last two thousand on Temeraire; which was second, though I sold him, private like, that I didn't think so much of the horse. Nor I don't believe he had the money for he had to give an L. O. U. for the half of it, anyhow."

"Ah! indeed? And who won the money, then?"

"Oh, another Englishman, sir—whew!—a hard one to owe to I should think, and fond of money, for I heard him say sharp like, 'Mind you, Bovill, if that isn't paid quick, I'll see you by George, I will—and you know it!'"

"And did he do so?" asked the stranger, carelessly, but he held his breath for a moment.

"I don't know quite, sir, but not if he wasn't very quick—leastways, not his own self, for the poor gentleman—Lor', what was his name, sir—him that was shot in his own park by a gentleman eighteen months ago."

"Heaven! how madly the listener's heart was throbbing with wild hope! Was this a clue at last? And yet how coolly the white lips said:

"Oh! you mean that mysterious murder of Mr. Rolf Guest at Elm Park?"

"That's the name, sir—and they acquitted the young fellow on the trial. Was you interested in it at the time, sir?"

The grim humour and irony of the question were irresistible; Albert Claremont smiled, and said, drily:

"Well—yes—I was. Why?"

"Only because it was a curious case, sir—mysterious, as you say."

"Yes, most people think the man was guilty, you know, though it wasn't proved legally."

"Well, he might be," said the little jockey, "or he might not be the murderer. I don't think he was, sir, sure as my name's George Winton. I think his story looks like what the truth. What do you think, sir?"

"I don't think at all, Mr. Winton," said the other with intense quietness. "I know he is as guileless of Guest's death as you are."

"Do you now, sir, really?" exclaimed the jockey, staring hard. "Maybe you know the gentleman, then?"

"Yes, I do. By-the-by, have you ever seen or heard anything more of that Mr. Bovill you mentioned since that Grand Prix day?"

"No, sir. Someone did tell me that he'd heard he had given up the turf and got some employment—quite good—ha! ha! ha!"

"The devil a monk would be," eh. You wouldn't know him again, I suppose?" carelessly remarked the other.

"Bless you sir, yes—anywhere! I fair-

ish, good-looking fellow. Yes, I'd swear to him!"

"I wonder if he did pay that debt?" said Claremont, indifferently. "Must, I suppose, for there was no such L. O. U. found either in Mr. Guest's pocket-book or anywhere amongst his papers. I remember that distinctly."

Winton gave him a shrewd, startled look.

"Mr. Guest put it into his pocket-book, then," he said, "what was found on him, if I call up the evidence. I stood by as he does it, and says to it, 'There, that's your nest.'"

"Great Heaven! at last—at last the light!" muttered Albert, leaning back, dizzy, dazzled, for a moment by the broad glare.

Winton looked at him with an odd, eager expression.

"Pardon me, sir, but I should like to ask what you mean by that you said."

The other bent forwards, and said, slowly:

"I mean that my strong suspicions are aroused by what you have told me to-night. I mean to ask you in the name of justice to keep silence about it absolutely till you hear from me—the man who has suffered so terribly for another's foul crime. I am Albert Claremont."

"Good Heavens! I half guessed it!" exclaimed the jockey, excitedly. "Shake hands, sir, please, if you'll so honor me, and count on George Winton. To think how often my wife and me's said you was innocent, and now to know we was right! But where's Pierce Bovill, I wonder, sir?"

Ah! where? Suspicion was neither finding nor proving. Where was he?

THE FOX TAIL TOROES.

An Adventure on the Frontier.

One day on the piazza of a Wisconsin summer hotel and old gentleman said to me, as we sat gazing out upon the waters of Lake Oneota sparkling in the bright afternoon sunlight: "If you like I will tell you a story whose events took place on this very lake."

After a little preliminary talk he told the tale. I reproduce it here as nearly as I can remember it in his own words.

My father was a clergyman in a backwoods district of Maine. His parishioners were so few and his salary so small he was forced to hunt and trap five days in the week, writing his sermon on Saturday.

When the emigration to Wisconsin began many of our neighbors decided to go and our family went with them. The Maine people found in this part of the State a region of lakes and forests much resembling the region they had come from. My father brought his family here to Lake Oneota, and the grove on yonder point, just where that gay summer cottage stands, he built a log cabin of three rooms and a shed.

His parish was now larger than ever and his parishioners much fewer; but if he had far to go to deliver his sermons, game and sporting animals were much more plentiful in the Wisconsin woods than in the woods of Maine.

Our nearest neighbor lived three miles distant. The nearest village was ten miles away, at the mouth of the little branch that empties into the head of the lake.

In the second year cold weather came early in November but no snow. The lake was frozen several feet thick. My little brothers and I enjoyed many a fine skate on the ice, drawing behind him a sled loaded high with the furs he expected to exchange for supplies at the settlement. Over his shoulder hung his rifle for there were wolves in this region then. They were not dangerous in summer but in the winter they hunted in packs and would not hesitate to attack a man.

The third child of the family, Freddie, had been feverish for a few days and among the things which father was to get at the settlement, the most important of all, was some medicine for him.

Now as my father was long to go, for we woods-children regarded this winter as a settlement as a great event; we looked forward eagerly to the delight of "pawing over" the sugar and spices and other wonderful things that would be on the sled in place of the furs. We even hoped, though we did not dare to breathe our hopes to the sled, that there might be a few toys on the sled.

Evening fell and the cold nipped so bitterly that we ceased our little excursions to the lake to see if we could hear father coming. As the darkness thickened I could see mother grow uneasy, but still, as father was frequently detained by some parish matter, she was not really alarmed. The children were sent off to bed, all except myself, I, as the eldest, was chosen to sit at Fred's bedside with mother.

His fever had increased and he lay moaning in a troubled sleep. We moistened his parched lips frequently, and as I was fully able to do that, I told mother to take a nap on the settee before the fire, and soon the sound of her breathing, regular as the ticking of the clock, told me she was asleep. I was tired myself, but I tried hard to keep awake. How long I did so, or how long I slept, I cannot tell. I opened my eyes with a snap. I had dreamed that some one with- out had called me.

I listened, and above the sighing of the north wind that had arisen while I slept I heard the long-drawn howl of a wolf, and then another howl, and another, until a chorus of terrible howls and snarling yells was borne by the wind. The howls grew louder and I knew the pack was approaching, as often they had. They seemed to stop in the wood at a little distance from the house, then they doubled their noise. In a moment more I heard a sniffling and scratching at the door, and although the howls still sounded some distance away, I knew that one wolf, at least, was prowling for us.

Mother awoke, but she was not frightened for our safety. The rude cabin doors were strong, and the windows were too small and high in the walls for a wolf to leap through. However, she did not conceal from me her anxiety about father. I told her he had probably remained at the settlement over night, and that even if he had not, no wolf could overtake him skating on the glacial ice.

Now as when a wolf detached himself from the main body in the grove and at last there were several howling around the house and sniffing at the doors.

The uproar awakened the sick boy. His fever had become greatly heightened, and he called for water. I went to the pail to

get him some and found it was empty. What should we do? Our water was brought from a spring down in the grove, the very place where the wolves seemed the thickest.

If there had been snow on the ground we might have opened the door and snatched a dipperful before the wolves could touch us. But there was no snow. We did not know what to do.

Fred called for water continually. Mother became nearly frantic. So did I. We both believed that unless Fred had water he would die before morning.

I went into the shed that I might gradually get a dipperful of water from the window. I could find no shot larger than duck shot, and I gave up my idea.

All around the shed hung many valuable furs. There were skins of all sorts of animals, but the most valuable were twelve fine fox skins with bushy tails. In one corner stood a barrel, and I peeped into it, although I knew it contained no water, being full of pitch used for caulking out boats.

Mother called me in and bade me open the Bible at random and read. In that way our family often sought comfort and counsel in times of trouble. The leaves opened at the fifteenth chapter of Judges, at the story of Samson fastening fire-brands to the tails of 300 hundred foxes and sending them through the grain fields of the Philistines.

I read, but the story seemed to give us no comfort, no suggestion. The wolves only howled louder, and the sick boy moaned more piteously.

Mother and I were quite beside ourselves. We must get water in some way. I opened the door to look out, and a great wolf thrust his head into the room.

Quickly I braced myself against the door. But the creature struggled vigorously and would have forced his way in, had not another seized a burning brand from the fire place and thrown it into his face. The wolf leaped back and I barred the door.

Then I remembered that wild animals were afraid of fire. I believed that if I could only make some sort of large torches I could get the water in safety. But of what material could I make my torches?

There were a few small logs lying by the fire-place, but firewood, and what I could get, that would not make good torches. I must have something that would flare and blaze.

I went into the shed. There was nothing there except furs. I was turning to go out, when my eyes fell upon the fox skins hanging above the barrel of pitch, and the story of Samson's foxes that I had just read darted into my head. Here were my torches! I would smear these fox tails with pitch and how they would blaze!

Without any reluctance at all I cut off the twelve beautiful brushes. I hung a kettle of pitch over the fire, and as soon as it was soft, gave the fox tails a thick coating. Then I brought out two long-handled fish spears and lapped their butt ends and then washed them together. With pieces of the wire which father used for snares I fastened the fox tails to the iron speartines. I thus had a long pole with torches at both ends, and by lighting all the torches at once and whirling the pole around I could walk sur- rounded by a circle of flame.

Mother insisted that I should light the torches and make a charge at the wolves to try the effect before starting to go to the spring. If the wolves ran, she was to sally out with a pail, and while I swung the torches she would carry the water.

I lighted the torches and stepped through the door. The wolves fled before me like frightened sheep. They stopped far off in the shadows where the light gradually faded into darkness, staring at the blaze with glistening eyes. I shook the torches at them and they scampered off so far in the darkness that I could scarcely see them.

Mother stepped out with the pail and closed the door. With the roaring, flaring, blazing whirling about us we hurried to the spring. We could see a crowd of wolves beneath a tree that overhung it, some of them sitting down like dogs, some leaping up as if trying to snap at something concealed in the branches. But they fled howling, as we approached with our glaring whirling circle of flame.

Mr. Rolf had dipped the pail in the spring when plumb' a dark object dropped from the tree frightening us so that pail and torches fell from our hands. But a familiar voice spoke before we had time to fly. It was father. The pack of wolves had overtaken him just as he reached the spring, and he had sprung up the tree.

There he sat within a few hundred feet of the house expecting to freeze to death if he stayed in the tree, and knowing that it was certain death to leave it. His rifle and the sled, its contents unharmed, were at the foot of the tree. Picking up our torches in a few moments, father was warming his chilled limbs before the fire, and Fred, after his drink of fresh water and his medicine, was sinking quietly to sleep. We heard the wolves all night, more or less, but we none of us minded that.

SPARE MOMENTS.

The average size of an American farm is 610 acres.

Some insects are in a state of maturity thirty minutes after birth.

A squad of policemen in Philadelphia now rush over their beats on bicycles.

Four pounds of gold have been collected from the soot